



Making the UK a welcoming environment for all migrants

What's the ask? The Government must remove all Hostile Environment policies and ensure undocumented people can access a simpler, affordable route to regularisation based on five years' residence.

Background

The 'Hostile Environment', sometimes referred to as the 'Compliant Environment', is a set of policies introduced in 2012 by then-Home Secretary Theresa May. They are designed to make life in the UK unliveable for people without formal immigration status. Undocumented people are at the sharpest end of these policies. However, these policies also cause harm, racism and discrimination to *all* migrants, as well as Black and Brown British citizens. The [Windrush Scandal](#), where Black Britons were fired, evicted, detained and deported because they couldn't prove their status, is the clearest example of this.

In 2012, the Government began making laws and policies to prevent migrants from accessing fundamental rights and services, including the rights to work, rent a home, access healthcare and state support. The measures also make it easier for the Home Office to access personal data held by public services, including people's immigration status. Professionals with a duty of care such as doctors, teachers and landlords are tasked with carrying out immigration checks. This causes [discrimination](#) and [harm](#) against people who are thought to look or sound 'non-British', and undermines trust in public services. When some of us are afraid to go to the doctor or report abuse due to fear of immigration enforcement, we are all made vulnerable.

None of the policies that caused the Windrush Scandal have been rolled back. In fact, in February 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced plans to 'ramp up' Hostile Environment policies including checks on bank accounts, which had been suspended after the Windrush Scandal. This followed the Home Secretary revealing plans to abandon three key Windrush recommendations.

How would it work?

The Government must remove the Hostile Environment in its entirety to prevent discriminatory harassment, mistreatment and exploitation against people based on they were born or the colour of their skin. This includes but is not limited to:

- Repealing the Right to Rent scheme, which was found by both the High Court and the Court of Appeal to cause [racial discrimination in the private rental market](#);
- Ending Right to Work checks, which render people vulnerable to [exploitation and trafficking](#), and make it harder for labour inspectorates to do their jobs effectively;
- Scrapping the No Recourse to Public Funds condition, which [discriminates](#) against women, disabled people and Black and Brown people, and pushes thousands into [poverty and insecure housing](#)
- Roll back NHS charging and data-sharing regimes, which [deter people from seeking healthcare](#), [undermine public health measures](#) and [make it harder for healthcare workers to do their jobs](#);

The Home Office acknowledges that Hostile Environment policies do not achieve their inhumane aim of forcing people out of the UK. On the contrary, there is an [extraordinary amount](#) of evidence about the damage these policies cause to migrant communities, and to our society overall.

Instead of punishing people for being undocumented, the Government should enable people to secure their immigration status so they can live safely in their communities. A [simpler, affordable route to regularisation](#) for undocumented people, based on five years' residence in the UK, would mean that people who have made the UK their home can claim essential rights and live safely as part of their communities.

For more detail on this issue, read JCWI's [manifesto](#), Liberty's '[Guide to the Hostile Environment](#)', or our [short briefing](#) on a 5-year route to regularisation. Please contact policy@jcwi.org.uk for more information.